

HENRI MURGER

The Bohemians of the Latin Quarter



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Henry Murger (1832-1861)

As much as any other work of literature, Henri Murger's 1851 collection of witty sketches *Scènes de la vie de bohème* shaped the later romanticized image of the bohemian artist: independent, insouciant, exuberantly lustful, devoted to Art for Art's sake no matter how cold and hungry the artist might be. Four young Parisian artists, Schounard the composer,

Marcel the painter, Rodolphe the poet, and Colline the philosopher, form an informal Bohemian alliance dedicated to Art and the joy of Life. Pretty and faithless young mistresses come and go from their beds, most notably Mimi, Phémie, and Musette, while the young artists do their best to foil their creditors and feed their bellies on the way to artistic glory. Resisting the conforming forces of Success and Society is their greatest challenge, and in the end the question is: Does a time come at last to give up the joys of Bohemia?

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